

Maricopa County Policies and Procedures	Subject: Rewarding Ideas Program	Number: A1509 Issue Date: 6/96
Approved:	Initiating Department: Human Resources	

A. Purpose

To establish County-wide procedures for an employee suggestion program encouraging employees to generate ideas for organizational improvements and providing a system for answering and recognizing adopted ideas in compliance with §ARS 38-614.

B. Policy

Maricopa County supports a work environment that encourages participation, innovation, and organizational improvement. The County encourages the use of the Rewarding Ideas Program which furnishes a process for submitting cost saving ideas to County Administration. The program is designed to encourage employees to take an increased interest in County operations and to generate cost saving ideas. The Rewarding Ideas Program is the responsibility of the Merit Award Board and the Maricopa County Human Resources Department.

Each member of the Board of Supervisors shall appoint one person to serve on the Merit Award Board. The Merit Award Board will consist of representatives from various departments. The term shall be at the pleasure of the appointing Supervisor. The Merit Award Board will provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for monetary awards to employees. The Merit Award Board has the exclusive right to establish award policy and structure of the suggestion system. This includes the right to amend the system at any time with due notice of change.

All suggestions become the exclusive property of Maricopa County and shall not form the basis of a future claim upon Maricopa County by the suggester/employee, his/her heirs, successors or assigns, including suggestions that are subsequently patented.

C. Authority and Responsibility

In accordance with ARS §38-614, every Maricopa County employee on active payroll status at the time of submission of a suggestion will be eligible to receive awards with the exception of the following: Members of the Board of Supervisors and the Merit Award Board, Rewarding Ideas Program Coordinator, high-level management, as determined by the Merit Award Board, and on-call, seasonal, and temporary employees.

D. Procedures

1. Suggester

Suggestion forms may be obtained from an employee's department representative, suggestion form boxes located in various buildings throughout Maricopa County, or the Human Resources Department. The suggester should read the instructions on the suggestion form, fill the form out completely and carefully, and then return it to the Rewarding Ideas Program Coordinator through interoffice mail. The suggester should retain a copy for his or her own records.

2. Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator will date and assign a suggestion control number to the suggestion. Eligible suggestions will be referred to the Department Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will prepare in advance all information required to expedite processing of the suggestion. In addition, the Program Coordinator will assure that each suggestion is fairly and thoroughly investigated and reported upon. The Program Coordinator will also request further information and investigation if rejection of a suggestion is questioned by a department.

To be eligible for an award, the suggestion must be adopted and implemented to accomplish one or a combination of the following:

- Save material, supplies, money, space, time, or labor;

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- Improve service, safety conditions, or morale;
- Improve methods, procedures, or equipment, resulting in increased output and/or efficiency; or,
- Eliminate unnecessary procedures, records and forms.

Suggestions not eligible for award are:

- Propositions which call attention to a problem but do not propose an acceptable solution.
- Those dealing with normal maintenance, unless such suggestions contribute to a solution of maintenance problems.
- Those dealing with salary adjustments, employee benefits and job classification.
- Those not original with the suggester, or those submitted for an ineligible suggester.
- Those which are duplications of suggestions submitted within the last 24 month period.
- Those submitted over 90 days after implementation of the suggestion.
- Those that contain an idea already under active consideration by the County.
- Those which are within the job responsibility of the suggester.
- Those that deal with hours and other terms and conditions of employment.
- Suggestions that do not relate to County nor fall within the authority or responsibility of the County or would require statutory change in the law.

3. Department Coordinator

Department Coordinators are charged with internal marketing and administration of the Rewarding Ideas Program. The Department Coordinator brings the suggestion to the attention of the division manager/director for review and assignment to a department evaluator. The Department Coordinator provides linkage between the suggester and evaluator as necessary. In addition, the Department Coordinator monitors the evaluation process to ensure completion within 45 days of receipt of the suggestion.

4. Department Evaluator

The Evaluator shall ensure the fair and careful review of suggestions submitted by employees in a timely manner. The Evaluator shall call upon additional resources from other departments, including the Office of Management and Budget, as needed. Evaluation of the suggestion will begin with initial determination that it is legal and safe. The Evaluator will then determine whether the suggestion has the potential to save money, generate revenue, reduce or eliminate waste, provide better customer service, save time, improve morale and/or productivity.

Based upon this analysis, the Evaluator will complete a Suggestion Evaluation form with a recommendation to accept or decline the suggestion. The form shall indicate whether or not the suggestion is feasible and cost effective, has been adopted, any actual or estimated reduction of expenditures made possible by the suggestion, or reason for its rejection. The Evaluator will return the Evaluation form to the Department Coordinator within 22 days of receiving the suggestion. If the suggestion is deemed not feasible for implementation, the suggester will receive a copy of the evaluation.

5. Department Budget Analyst

The Department Coordinator will forward the suggestion to the Department Budget Analyst who will analyze any tangible savings in light of the current budget. The Analyst will attest to the accuracy of amounts saved by signing the Suggestion Evaluation form. The Analyst will then return the completed form to the Department Coordinator.

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6. Office of Management and Budget

The suggestion and evaluation will then be forwarded to the Office of Management and Budget for verification of savings. It is then returned to the department one final time for approval by the department director or elected official, indicating commitment to implement. The suggestion is then forwarded to the Merit Award Board for review and award consideration. **Note:** All evaluations ***must have*** the signature of the department director/manager ***authorizing implementation and reward recommendation***.

7. Merit Award Board

The Merit Award Board will review the department's evaluation and determine if an award should be made. If the suggestion is acceptable and meets the criteria for an award, the Merit Award Board will recommend, with the concurrence of the relevant department or agency head, to the Board of Supervisors that the suggester receive an award. The Program Coordinator will notify the suggester that the suggestion has been implemented and accepted for an award.

8. Board of Supervisors

Upon receiving a recommendation from the Merit Award Board, the Board of Supervisors shall consider the recommendation and approve it unless, after investigating the operation of the suggestion, the Board determines the recommendation is not in accordance with the provisions of the Merit Rules and Regulations in which event the Board shall direct the Merit Award Board to reanalyze the suggestion and make a new recommendation. Upon approval by the Board of Supervisors, the award, if any is recommended, shall be made at a Formal Board Meeting.

Suggestions will be determined ***"closed" but not "declined"*** if the evaluating department is unable to determine an approximate implementation/adoption date within 12 months of evaluation of the suggestion (i.e., due to budgetary constraints). The suggester may retain ownership of the suggestion by resubmitting the idea within one year and thirty days of notification. The suggestion must be resubmitted on a new form referencing the original suggestion control number.

E. Reward Levels

If a suggestion is determined to provide a tangible benefit from either additional revenues or savings in materials, equipment, overhead or deleted positions, a cash award of 20% of the first year's savings may be awarded to the suggester. In no event will the monetary award to any one suggestion exceed \$1,000 or be less than \$25.

If a suggestion provides intangible benefits to a department, a certificate of commendation or a cash award up to \$100 may be awarded to the suggester. These intangible benefits may include time savings, improved morale, improved customer service, etc. for which monetary values cannot be determined.